

Limitations and Future Directions

The present results suggest that to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of moral development among Indian children, adolescents, or adults, future methods and analyses would benefit from the inclusion of an emic approach. Both, scenarios that are salient to participants' everyday lives and participants' real-life moral experiences represent such emic approaches. Additionally in-depth, qualitative examinations and methods such as discourse analysis may help capture the complexities of the Indian moral worldview in participants' moral reasoning and throw light on how an indigenous worldview manifests itself in moral reasoning, behavior and thought.

In the present thesis, Study 1 employed cross-sectional analyses to examine the degree of use of the three ethics (Autonomy, Community, and Divinity) among participants in middle childhood and early adolescence. Longitudinal designs are more effective in addressing developmental change. Keeping this in mind, the researcher employed longitudinal analyses for Study 2. Although expensive and time consuming, longitudinal analyses is preferred for the study of developmental change. While moral reasoning has been studied longitudinally in Europe and North America, there is a lacunae in this regard in India. Further, future research with a larger sample would increase the power of quantitative analyses. Here, many of the analyses came out significant. Research using the present data collection and analysis approaches are highly time consuming, and this needs to be balanced against increasing sample size.

Future research on participants' real-life moral experiences would provide additional insight into their moral reasoning. The present scenarios, as described earlier, were created through an extensive process to be highly salient to the everyday lives of all the children included here. Also, the use of scenarios meant that all children responded to the same moral

issues, unlike what happens when participants are asked to discuss their own real-life moral experiences. As the interviews showed, children often discussed the scenarios by speaking of “I” and what they would do. Nonetheless, research on children’s own moral experiences would provide additional insight into their actual lives and socialization contexts, and it would show the extent to which their reasoning depends on whether an issue involves the self or a protagonist in a story.

Finally, there is a need for research that includes different socio-economic groups within a culture. Social class continues to be a defining element of Indian society. In order to represent the Indian population it is crucial to involve all sections of the society in research and to have their representation in the academic world. Through Study 1, we attempted to do the same. However, some populations such as the present low-SES Indian children in Study 1 were virtually impossible to track longitudinally for Study 2. Nonetheless, they merit careful developmental research, even if such research cannot be longitudinal.

CONCLUSION

In contrast to the corpus of current literature on moral development, the present cultural-developmental study with Indian children, adolescents and adults contributes unique findings to the field of moral psychology. Findings present distinct developmental trajectories for the use of the Big Three Ethics of morality across childhood and adolescence using cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis. Additionally, in-depth qualitative analysis of adult responses to questions on personhood, God and suffering using an emic approach illuminates fundamental aspects of the Indian moral worldview, more specifically the indigenous concepts of *karma*, *dharma*, and *shraddhā*.